

# News from Ed Markey

**United States Congress**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Massachusetts Seventh District**

**CONTACT: Mark Bayer**

**or Israel Klein**

**(202) 225-2836**

## **MARKEY SEEKS ANSWERS FROM HOMELAND SECURITY DEPARTMENT ON URANIUM SHIPMENT SLIPPED INTO U.S.**

*Depleted Uranium Transported in Crate Was Undetected at Port of Los Angeles*

**Washington, D.C.:** Rep. Edward Markey (D-MA), a senior member of the Select Committee on Homeland Security, today sent a letter to Department of Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge to request information about a shipment containing depleted uranium – a by-product of the industrial processing of weapons-grade highly-enriched uranium - that ABC News was able to transport undetected through the Port of Los Angeles on September 2, 2003. While depleted uranium is considered a harmless substance, its radioactive properties are similar to highly-enriched uranium, which can be used to build a crude nuclear explosive device or a radiological “dirty bomb.”

In a letter sent to Secretary Ridge on September 12, 2003, Rep. Markey questioned the Department’s capabilities to detect the importation of dangerous, weapons-usable materials in light of its failure to detect the depleted uranium shipped to the Port of Los Angeles. The Department’s response to Rep. Markey’s September letter failed to resolve the issues he raised regarding these capabilities. The letter Rep. Markey sent today seeks further explanation from the Department about its ability to detect radiological materials that could be used by terrorists to cause destruction on a massive scale.

Rep. Markey stated, “This week, media reports indicated that terrorists continue their quest to steal radiological materials that could be used to make radiological dirty bombs. The detonation of a dirty bomb inside the United States would be a devastating blow to our homeland security, and we need to put in place tough new measures to prevent such an attack from occurring.”

“The letter I sent to Secretary Ridge today seeks answers about the Homeland Security Department’s ability to stop terrorists from smuggling radioactive, weapons-usable material into the United States. The shipment waived through security at the Port of Los Angeles last summer contained a few pounds of harmless depleted uranium, but the Department’s failure to detect the depleted uranium suggests serious gaps in its ability to stop highly-enriched uranium, which terrorists could use to build a dirty bomb. It’s essential that we improve the Department’s radiation detection capabilities so that we can deny entry to dangerous radiological materials sought by terrorists,” Rep. Markey continued.

“We also need to lock down radiological materials at the source, reducing the possibility that they will fall into the wrong hands and be fashioned into weapons that could harm Americans. Earlier this year, I introduced H.R. 891, The Dirty Bomb Prevention Act, which requires the closure of glaring security holes in the storage and tracking of radiological materials, including increased security for facilities that store these materials and background checks for personnel that have access to them. An effective homeland security strategy requires a comprehensive approach, which includes tighter control over radioactive materials and improved capabilities to defeat terrorist efforts to smuggle them into the U.S.,” Rep. Markey concluded.

The letter and Dirty Bomb Prevention Act can be found at [www.house.gov/markey](http://www.house.gov/markey).

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